



FEDERAL PLAN FOR UNIVERSAL MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE USE HEALTH

Executive Summary¹



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous

ACT FOR MENTAL HEALTH

1. This vision and proposed actions build on the 2012 Mental Health Commission of Canada's 'Changing Directions, Changing Lives: The Mental Health Strategy for Canada.' https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/drupal/MHStrategy_Strategy_ENG.pdf

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When it comes to mental health, it would simply be untrue to call our health system **universal**. It's true that there is mental health care. But only some of us will get it. As a country, we've failed to invest in the mental health and substance use health care we need, and it shows.

- One third of people in Canada will experience a mental illness or substance use disorder in their lifetime.² And yet, a third of those Canadians can't get the mental health care they need³ and that rises to 75% for children.
- In 2020, nearly 1 in 4 hospitalizations for children and youth ages 5 to 24 were for mental health conditions.⁴
- In 2017, 275,000 people were hospitalized and 75,000 lives were lost due to substance use.⁵

There was already a crisis. The pandemic made things worse. Alarmingly so.

- What was already an opioid toxicity crisis intensified. Between January 2016 and December 2021 there have been over 29,000 opioid toxicity-related deaths in Canada, and over 44,000 hospitalizations for opioid and stimulant-related poisoning.⁶

- Since the onset of the pandemic, 37% of Canadians reported a deterioration in their mental health.⁷ Over a quarter of Canadians reported high levels of anxiety, and 17% reported feeling a high level of depression,⁸ and over half experienced symptoms related to post-traumatic stress disorder.⁹

We can't afford to let Canada's mental health crisis spiral. Poor mental health conservatively costs Canada \$50 billion per year.¹⁰ Substance use costs the Canadian economy an additional \$46 billion a year.¹¹ New investment in mental health and substance use health is not new money "out." It is money saved and it is money injected back into the economy.

- Every dollar spent in mental health returns \$4 to \$10 to the economy.¹²
- Improving access to treatments for depression could boost the economy by \$32.3 billion a year, and anxiety treatments could boost the economy by \$17.3 billion a year.¹³

Yet Canada lags behind other countries in smart investments in mental health and substance use health, spending only 5-7% of overall healthcare budgets on mental health.

2. <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/datalab/mental-illness-blog.html> and <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-624-x/2013001/article/11855-eng.htm>

3. <https://www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/the-crisis-is-real>

4. <https://www.cihi.ca/en/children-and-youth-mental-health-in-canada>

5. <https://csuch.ca/publications/CSUCH-Canadian-Substance-Use-Costs-Harms-Report-2020-en.pdf>

6. <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/substance-related-harms/opioids-stimulants/>

7. <https://cmha.ca/brochure/summary-of-key-findings-ubc-4/>

8. <https://heron-mandarin-jxzs.squarespace.com/covid-data-portal> and <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f31a311d93d0f2e28aaf04a/t/62fbbdfc8d13100a5a91c27/1660665824434/MHRC+Understanding+Mental+Health+of+Canadians+Through+COVID-19+and+Beyond+-+Poll+13+Report+Final.pdf>

9. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f31a311d93d0f2e28aaf04a/t/62fbbdfc8d13100a5a91c27/1660665824434/MHRC+Understanding+Mental+Health+of+Canadians+Through+COVID-19+and+Beyond+-+Poll+13+Report+Final.pdf>

10. This doesn't include costs associated with lost employer revenue due to employee absenteeism, costs related to increased demand for social assistance programs, reduced tax revenue due to unemployment and costs incurred by caregivers. https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/drupal/2017-03/case_for_investment_eng.pdf

11. \$13 billion is attributed to direct healthcare costs, \$20 billion to lost productivity and over \$9 billion to criminal justice costs.

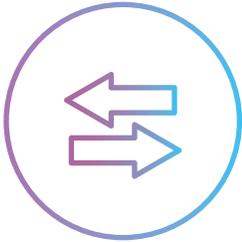
12. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(16\)30024-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(16)30024-4/fulltext) and https://cpa.ca/docs/File/Practice/roi_mental_health_report_en.pdf

13. https://www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/7139ae58-7434-4326-bbfb-80756392890d/8242_Healthy-Brains-Workplace_BR.pdf

Investing in mental health and substance use health isn't just the right thing to do. It's the smart thing to do. And we can't afford not to.

We all have the right to mental health care and substance use health care that is publicly funded and free to everyone when they need it.

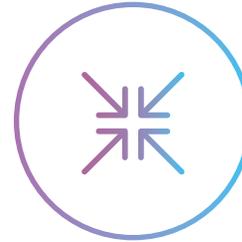
To achieve this, the federal government must:



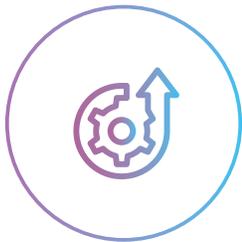
Create a permanent Canada Mental Health and Substance Use Health Transfer equivalent to 12% of provincial/territorial health care spending (\$5.3B) ramped up over 5 years, with 50% earmarked for community services.



Create a Canada Universal Mental Health and Substance Use Health Act to accompany the Canada Mental Health and Substance Use Health Transfer.



Fully decriminalize simple possession of illicit substances and increase investments in substance use prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery services.



Work to create the social and economic conditions that contribute to good mental health by:

- a. Amending the federal National Housing Strategy to establish a new ten-year investment for the dedicated acquisition, conversion, and construction of 100,000 supportive housing units.
- b. Establishing a new multi-year funding stream for community-based organizations to cover operational and support costs for supportive housing units.
- c. Creating a Canada Disability Benefit, with an assured income floor of \$2,200 per month.
- d. Launching three basic income pilot projects, designed with a view to studying and implementing a Universal Basic Income Guarantee.
- e. Increasing the Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) Opportunities Fund.
- f. Implementing automatic tax-filings.

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

As of November 14, 2022

[ABRAR Trauma and Mental Health Services](#)

[Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights](#)

[BGC Canada](#)

[Broadbent Institute](#)

[Canadian Urban Institute](#)

[Canada without Poverty](#)

[Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists](#)

[Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention](#)

[Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives](#)

[Canadian Child Care Federation](#)

[Canadian Chiropractic Association](#)

[Canadian Consortium for Early Intervention in Psychosis \(EPI Canada\)](#)

[Canadian Council of Muslim Women](#)

[Canadian Mental Health Association](#)

[Canadian Nurses Association](#)

[Canadian Partnership on Perinatal Mental Health](#)

[Canadian Psychiatric Association](#)

[Canadian Psychological Association](#)

[Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\)](#)

[Community Addictions Peer Support Association \(CAPSA\)](#)

[Community-Based Research Centre](#)

[Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity](#)

[College of Family Physicians of Canada](#)

[Frayme](#)

[HealthCareCAN](#)

[National Initiative for Eating Disorders](#)

[Psychosocial Rehabilitation Canada](#)

[Public Service Alliance of Canada](#)

[Schizophrenia Society of Canada](#)

[Wellesley Institute](#)

[Women's Shelters Canada](#)

[YMCA Canada](#)

[YouthRex](#)

[YWCA](#)

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